

CREATIVE WRITING CHAPBOOK



SESSION 3 2023



6 POINTS
**CREATIVE
ARTS
ACADEMY**
A URJ SUMMER CAMP



A Note from the Editor

Welcome to the creative writing major's third chapbook of the summer of 2023. The theme of this summer is from Pirkei Avot. "Know from where you came, and to where you are going." In creative writing we explored this idea by learning about a concept in writing called "Into the Woods" - and no, it's not the Sondheim musical! The concept of

"Into the Woods" is similar to the idea of the hero's journey. It's the idea that if a character travels into the woods they'll somehow change. They'll gain something or lose something and leave the woods with a different outlook on life. The woods can be anything that forces change: a literal forest, a shopping mall, a high school, a summer camp. This idea of "Into the Woods" fits perfectly with our theme of needing to know our past so that we can move towards our future. In these pages you are about to embark on countless journeys: some focus on the past, some on the future, and some settle into the present. You will say goodbye to a beloved camp, travel through space to the International Space Station, help solve a murder mystery that bounces back and forth through time, skateboard on the stars, help rescue lost bee princesses, and spend time at the gay clubs of the seventies! I am so proud of our third session campers and their ability to revise and rewrite and create the most imaginative of worlds. These stories and poems are the hard work of six writers who have spent the last two weeks pushing themselves to write in new and different ways. I couldn't be prouder. Enjoy!

Session Two Instructors:

Creative Writing Arts Mentor: Carly Husick

Isaac Finkelstein - Olim

Shana Deitz - Bonim/Shoreshim

Susie Berg - Faculty

Cover Art:

“The Enchanted Path” - Clara Colby, Age: 11

“Mushroom Stepping Stones” - Leah Furman, Age: 11

“Know from
where you came,
and to where
you are going.”

- Pirkei Avot

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My piece demonstrates this summer's theme in a unique way. I'm told to know from where I came, and to where I'm going. I'm not proud of where I'm from, if I even know where that is. And to where I'm going could be New Zealand, but that's a very large place, anything could happen. I prefer to see where I'm going unfold as I go along. I'm not sure where I came from, and I have no idea where I'm going. Moving to New Zealand is a big journey. All I know is right now, and that's the way it should be.

A Guide on How to Say Goodbye by Zel Schneider, Age: 11

I said I'd love you
Until the frogs rain in the street
I said I'd love you
Until the bright sun explodes into a supernova
I said I'd love you
Until the little black ants become as large as house cats
I said I'd love you
Until we crash into the moon
I said I'd love you
Until our ears stop ringing and all we hear is silence
I said I'd love you
Until we run out of cows to slaughter
I said I'd love you
Until saltwater floods our cities knee high
I said I'd love you... forever.

In one year I am leaving my home to move to the other side of the world. I've lived in Miami all my life, and now my family and I are moving to New Zealand. We're tired of sharing a home with mosquitoes and golf monsters. Our governor eats pudding with his fingers, and he controls our city. I'm fine with leaving my whole life behind, school, friends, all of it can go. I won't miss the humid air around my house or the sunburns I get from spending minutes

outdoors. I don't want to have to put some of the strongest SPF on my face every morning. I'm tired of sweaty clothing and the constant buzzing around me. I want to let go of all of this. The only thing I don't want to let go of is you, CAA.

I made a promise
A pinky promise
Where I would say
"Next finger! And the next finger!"
That I would never forget you
Because when I feel like giving up
You are my push to keep going
When I need to lay down and weep
You are my shoulder to cry on
When I grow weak and need strength
You are my giver
When my mind is dim
You are my light bulb
When my eyes see black and white
You are my vibrant colors
When I feel that I have nothing
You are my everything
When I have no one
You are next to me

I have to learn how to say goodbye. Maybe I can sign my name on the sky bed, or hide a piece of paper behind a book. I have little trinkets, jars, flags, papers, books all proving I've been here. There's a shelf at home with all my items that bring me joy just by looking at them. I've gained friends and shirts that bring back memories. That squid hat is the time I went to Dorney Park, and that paper is the writing I created for Shabbat. Photos of bugs and grass that are printed and hung up. Videos of my dances, pictures that capture the happiness I felt in the moment. Phone numbers to text when I'm bored, published stories all on a single

website. I could stare at them for hours, reminiscing over the times with best friends. You've built up my personality since I was nine, and it's prepared me for a life somewhere new. You've taught me how to use the core values, to give, to love, to teach, and to know what is right. You taught me how to use my voice, and to speak up for what I believe in. How to use my talents to put my dreams on paper.

Sometimes I wonder
Is leaving worth the pain
Of saying goodbye?
If I had a choice
Would I have come here in the first place?
There are people
Who have tried to bring me down
They got close
But you pulled me back up
It's a tough world we face when we leave
I'm tired of people making me feel what I feel
But I won't let them
Not again

You'll stay in my memories until the end of time
It's our fault the world could end soon
You won't live much longer
The air and the ocean are getting hotter and hotter
In Miami
We hear a problem
It goes in one ear and out the other
We put up a caution sign
Saying 'Wet Floor'
Nobody cleans it up
Nothing gets done

In New Zealand
Water could be contaminated
Workers actively try to clean the water
We'll clean up our mess
I want to leave
Because in Miami we seem hopeless
Just because society thinks that I am not capable
That I am too young
Too powerless
Too weak
But I am more than a girl
In a brown no-waist ankle-long dress
Standing before you
I want to see a future
Where climate change is moving slower
If we continue on this path
We'll be gone
I will be in a better country
Not perfect
But better than anything this is
No matter where I am
You'll be in heart and mind
So thank you for everything you've given me
Because you were my forever
But I wasn't yours
And even though I'll be on the other side of the world
Where you'll be submerged first
I'll always remember you

My story connects to the theme because... It talks about someone who wants to study and work hard, and a lot of setbacks happen, but nothing stops him from where he wants to go. He knows where he came from, and where he wants to go. Because it also talks about how he wants to get into N.A.S.A., and where he is going as an intelligent human being.

Unidentified Dilly-Dallying Objects by Elijah Greenhouse, Age: 10

The bell rings. You walk out of the high school and hear the joy and laughter of kids in the neighborhood. You walk into a parking lot filled with people and vehicles talking and starting up. Soon enough, you're on a sidewalk and you find your parked Toyota, and drive home. Welcome to Boston.

+

Hi. I'm Chester. Ever since I was 6 years old I've been interested in space and science, and its vibrant mystery and great knowledge. Right now I'm 18 years old and am considered the nerd or wimp here. I can't wait until I study a lot and become a worker in the International Space Station. Then I can show off that I'm actually smart and am a very good person. Anyways, I'm trying to get into Boston University and maybe get into a school to study more. I've sent my application already, and I'm waiting impatiently and anxiously.

JANUARY 30TH, 2024

Well, it's been a month, and I finally think that the letter has come in the mail!!!! I wonder what it says: "Hello, Chester. We've received your application and seen your knowledge, but have decided your technique isn't quite what we're looking for. We're sorry to tell you that you're going to have to find another college."

With knowledge,

Boston University

“SHOOT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!” I guess I didn't get in. I walk sorrowfully back up the driveway, feeling the cold, crunchy, icy snow sinking beneath my boots like a ball dropping and falling into the depths of a beanbag chair. I kick my boots off and drag my soaking wet socks into the dining room.

“Who left these wet tracks everywhere?” says my mom with anger and frustration. The next thing I know I'm scrubbing the floor vigorously like I'm massaging a brick wall. Nothing is more horrendous. I go to bed listening to the quiet chirp of the night and its cricket children. I fall asleep as my eyelids get heavy and close. I dream about the mad feeling I felt when they rejected my application. I'm NOT over it.

I am surprised when I come downstairs. I see a note on the kitchen table, “Dear Chester, Dad and I have decided to take a vacation. Have fun! XOXO, Mom & Dad.” Wow. I guess they finally left. Suddenly, I'm hit with a brilliant idea.

“Yes! Just enough!!” I pay for tickets at Logan Airport to take a little vacation myself!! I board Gate C2 leaving for Nevada. Halfway through the flight, the attendant hands me a bag of peanuts, and I chow it down like a rabbit with lettuce.

“Finally! I'm here!” I get off the plane and run very far all the way (I actually walked) to my guest house I booked. Conveniently it's only A FEW miles away from AREA 51! (hint, hint.) At night, I run outside. I sneak like a ninja through the mist and sand mysteriously lying gently on a bed of night air.

As I walk, no, creeeeep, quietly towards the site, I taste some musty mildew mist mellowly resting on my tongue. I swiftly crawl into sector 5 where they make ships. I grab the parts I need and build, build, build, until 12:34 AM. I fall into a deep sleep and before I know it, the sun is bright and it's a new day.

“Awwwww!” I yawn as I wake up. Hmmm, I think. I grab the 7 engines and engage the contraption. I hook up the pulse rockets and stare at the blueprints a couple more times. I grab my air tank to fill oxygen into the ship, and grab the gear. 5 hours later, I stand triumphantly beneath it and stare as if I've solved the equation Albert Einstein didn't finish before he died.

“Finally finished,” I sigh. “Phew!”

I switch on the ship and...3...2...1....

“BBBPHHHRRRAAHHHHAACACCACAAAAA!!!!!!” The ship travels at approximately 67,000 MPH (29,800 MPS). So, within 8.5 minutes I’m free of Earth’s atmosphere, but the space station is still 32,000 miles away.

A half hour later, I arrive at the space station just floating peacefully about 30,000-70,000 miles above the surface of the Earth. Clean, glimmering white metallic shell and some very spaced and almost perfectly straight solar platforms carefully placed precariously on the ends of the main vault.

“The architecture is amazing!” I yell. I release the tunnel, (which is actually made of folding doors) and connect to the station’s door. The door to the tunnel opens, but when I crawl to the end, the door inside the space station is locked. Luckily, I brought an electric drill I found on the floor in sector 5.

Within five minutes I unscrew the door. Since there is only 3/100% gravity there I don’t have to hold it. I crawl into the space station and screw the door back on. Then I use the remote to disengage the tunnel.

“Stop! No UDDOs (Unidentified Dilly-Dallying Objects) allowed in the ISS!!” says a loud and assertive voice, like a general or a colonel in the army. I’m suddenly surrounded by five workers, each wearing ISS suits with white stitching and blue coats, pants, and boots. White padding is on the knees and elbows and there are some metal collars around the neck. Kind of like a blue spacesuit, but without air tanks or helmets. One of them has a curly redhead, a clean, smooth, bald chin, and freckles on the cheeks and nose.

Another one has a bald head, a button nose, and a fingerless black glove on the right hand but not the left. The third one has dark brown silky hair and she’s wearing diamond earrings. The fourth has dark sunglasses and long blond hair with a scruffy yellow beard. And the last is wearing a Colorado hat with teal-dyed hair sticking out and a gold chain necklace.

Their name tags (in order of description) read Co. Hector, General Dan, Dr. Nolan, Dr. Marshall, and Assistant Nathan. Dr. Nolan suddenly ties me up and brings me down the hallway. Assistant Nathan turns on the artificial gravity and I fall into a cell with ice cream sandwiches in the corner and a plexiglass cage window.

General Dan turns around and says, “Kid, you shouldn't be here. No one has authority to come here without permission from their space program, and you don’t even look like you’re an unpaid intern!!!! After we’re done with you and this mission, we’re gonna send

you back to where you came from, and wherever you're going, it's not gonna be N.A.S.A!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”

With that, he turns back on his heel and walks away. I start crying and tell myself I won't ever get to where I want to be.

I'm just a stupid, obsessed, science-loving nerd, and I can't do anything right!!! I probably won't even... “BEEP BEEP BEEP!!! BEEP BEEP BEEP!!! BEEP BEEP BEEP!!!!!!!!!!”

“Why is the breach alarm going off?!!?” says Dr. Nolan.

“It is the three beat, which means one of the solar platforms is breached,” I say. Dr. Marshall stares at me as if I were a two year old who solved four times six.

“How do you know that?” he asks.

“I've been studying books, and am one of the only people that actually watches space documentaries, so I am very reliable with my knowledge of space and codes,” I say. I break out of my cell and run to my remote to engage the tunnel. I rush like a cheetah to my spacesuit and open the window. I'm now fully in deep space.

It is amazing! I'm floating around and happy! But I must get there quickly. The space station is traveling very fast around the Earth, at approximately 6 days to make one full orbit. I land fast on the gigantic solar platform with no sound at all. When in deep space, sound does not have a medium to travel through, due to lack of air, CO₂, oxygen, and many other substances. I take the new solar panel I brought with me from the ship, and replace it. But my happiness doesn't last long. My oxygen level is very low, so I must hurry. I quickly climb down and take out my electric drill and break hard into the space station. I struggle to get back up and screw the door back on. I fall over with hard exhaustion and everything goes black.

I wake up to a surprise. I'm lying in a hospital bed and I'm plugged into a heart monitor. I breathe heavily and turn over. Everything hurts. I've lost feeling in my legs and my head feels like jelly. Two people walk into a room and one is a curly redhead, with a clean, smooth bald chin, and the other has a bald head, a button nose, and one shriveled up black fingerless glove on the right hand. Name tags read Co. Hector, and General Dan. I feel a sign of comfort and hope as they both say, “you're a hero.”

My story relates to the theme of Know From Where You Came, and to Where You are Going for two reasons. First, this story time-jumps. We start in the past, go to the present, go back to the past, etc etc. Mel comes from a small town where she was known as 'Loud Mel' and she will always remember that, it has shaped her as a person. She is heading towards death of course. The second reason my story relates to the theme is because the case of Mel Brunswick was cold for ten years, but Arnold Pailer decided to re-open it. To find out everything that happened to Mel, he had to go into her past. I hope you enjoy the story!

Iced White Mocha by Eva Resnik, Age 13

Mel Brunswick, September 21, 2004

Not a lot of people like me, this is because I can only shout. I can't whisper. I can't talk normally either. It's been like this since I was a baby. My parents would say that they couldn't take me ANYWHERE when I was a toddler, because if you think normal toddler's are loud, you should've met me. When I was in elementary school and I would see the other girls whispering on the playground, I would always want to join them but they would never let me, they would say, "Go away Loud Mel! You're gonna yell all of our secrets!" I would sulk away and swing on the swings all by myself.

Even now, at my job (which is very boring) when we have lunch break no one wants me to sit with them because I'm too loud, and whenever I say something, even if I WILL myself to say something under my breath, it comes out as a shout and I HAVE gotten in trouble a few times because of it.

~~~

After a usual day at work, I step outside and go to my favorite coffee shop - The Melted Bean. As I step in, I notice there is a new barista (that's how many times I've been here, I remember the baristas).

"Hello, welcome to The Melted Bean!" The barista says, chipper. She looks around my age and seems vaguely familiar. She has shiny brown hair that seemed to follow her as

she turned around to look at me, the corners of her icy blue eyes crinkling with a smile. I feel like I know her from somewhere, but I can't place where.

"Hi, can I please get an iced white mocha and a slice of banana bread?" I ask, then I swipe my card.

"Coming right up!" The barista says, I still can't place where I know her from but I catch a glimpse of her name tag, Avery. Why do I remember that name?

I go and get my drink and take a sip. I start to feel dizzy, it's weird. An overwhelming feeling of tiredness overcomes me and I fall to the ground. I hear distant yelling and I see people crowding around me. I hear someone calling my name but I can't respond. If I close my eyes it will all just go away, right?

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Arnold Pailer, AUGUST 30, 2014

Jessica Archer: Arnold Pailer! What a pleasure it is to have you in the studio today!

Arnold: Thanks so much Jessica, It's a pleasure to be here.

Jessica: So, Arnold, you have solved one of the most mysterious cases of our time. Can you tell us a little bit about how you got started?

Arnold: Yes, yes I can. I was cleaning out my files one day when I came across one that had been announced cold. It was the case of Mel Brunswick of course. When the case was still going on, I wasn't on it, but it had always intrigued me. Mel Brunswick "the woman who shouts".

Jessica: Now, can you describe Mel's childhood for me?

Arnold: Yes I can.

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Mel Brunswick, 1974 (13 years old)

I sit on a seat at a lunch table alone, everyone who passes by staring at me with pity, yet not sitting down. “Loud Mel” is what the kids in my class call me. It’s what they’ve called me since preschool. It makes me feel bad, not that middle schoolers would care if you felt bad about something or not. As I unwrap my sandwich two girls come up to me, Clara and Alexis. They act nice but I know they talk about me.

“Hey Mel, how’s your lunch?” Clara asks, but she doesn’t sit down, she just stands there, looming over me.

I look at her, knowing what she wants me to do and not giving in to it.

“C’mon Mel, you know, it’s rude to ignore people,” Alexis chides, looking at me with a smirk curving her lips. Clara and Alexis are two of the most popular girls in the school, and honestly it makes sense why. They’re pretty, and they have lots of friends. Avery Rile being one of their meanest ones. She is in my math class. Plus, their parents are very influential in our very small town. Everyone knows everyone here, and everyone knows everything that happens. Which means everyone knows about me.

“Why won’t you tell me how your lunch is Mel?” Clara asks again which snaps me back to reality. I don’t answer her. I know that she wants me to yell and I won’t give in.

“Me-el,” Alexa says, her upturned lips going down into a pout. “Tell us!” She draws out the ‘S’ making her sound more whiny than usual.

“STOP!” My voice booms over the cafeteria, drowning out the steady hum of the refrigerator.

“Mel Brunswick! No yelling in the cafeteria!” yells a teacher (ironic, right).

Alexa and Clara snicker and walk away, back to their friends who are all staring at me. After lunch, I take my stuff into my last class for today, because I have a free period next. This class is math. It’s my favorite subject and my favorite teacher, Ms. Bird teaches it. She understands that I can’t talk normally, so she never calls on me unless I have my hand up. But today we have a sub, Mr. Boreyng, pronounced ‘boring’ I’m not kidding. When he was going through attendance I was one of the first because my last name starts with a B.

“Mel Brunswick,” he calls. Even his voice is boring. Plus - he smells like my grandpa’s house - old wool and pipes and cheap cologne. Ew.

“HERE!” I shout. Then I slink down my seat, feeling my cheeks go red with embarrassment. Mr. Boreyng just sighs. For me, yelling doesn't take up any extra energy like everyone else. It feels natural, smooth almost.

“You know you don't have to yell, right?” Avery Rile, another friend of Clara and Alexis, turns around in her seat, her perfectly shiny hair following her head, and glares at me with her icy blue eyes. Avery's parents are also very well known in my town, due to them being two of the biggest real-estate agents.

“SORRY!” I shout back, then I realize that I shouted again. I sink down even further in my seat as Avery sighs and turns back around. We go about the class and everything is okay. Until it's not. We get to a difficult math problem and I know the answer. I scribble it down in my notebook and Mr. Boreyng goes around and checks on everyone's work. When he gets to mine, he looks pleasantly shocked, eyes going wide and eyebrows going up.

“Miss, uh, Brunswick can you please share with the class your answer and how you got it?” He looks at me expectantly.

“UHM, I CAN'T REALLY, UHM,” I stammer, and everyone looks at me.

“Miss Brunswick can you please talk normally,” he looks at me as if I've done something wrong, which I guess I have.

“She can't, she can only yell. It's annoy-ying.” Avery squints her eyes at me, looking at me like I'm an animal behind a glass wall.

“Okay, well then, I suppose I should just share the answer,” says Mr. Boreyng.

Math goes on and he avoids me the whole time, which doesn't bother me. I'm used to it. When the bell rings and I go to my next class, it feels like the day is in triple speed.

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As I lay in bed, I realise how much easier my life would be if I didn't have to yell. It's not like I've never thought about it before, in fact I think about it almost every night. I hate it. My parents always say that I'll learn to live with it and accept it. But I don't want to accept it. I want to do something. But what would I do?

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Arnold Pailer, Aug 30, 2014

Jessica: That was really interesting, how did her late teenage years go?

Arnold: They were just as difficult, especially high school. Her therapist noted that she had many bad thoughts and also thought about getting voice surgery a lot.

Jessica: Aw, that must've been tough for such a young mind. Can you tell us what it was like for her to try to get into college and as a young adult?

Arnold: It wasn't that difficult for her to get into college, she had good grades and did extracurriculars and was in general a good student. However, Mel did want to get into a sorority and they rejected her because they didn't like that she yelled, although it would've been good for spirit days.

Jessica: Interesting. I know that she worked in finance, but how did she get there? I've heard it's a job that does a lot of talking, to customers and to co-workers

Arnold: Well, it depends on the job. Mel got a job where she was just filing and filling out paperwork, no need for talking. And, according to her co-workers, she kept mostly to herself. She had a little corner cubicle and always ate alone. Actually, Mel did most things alone, which is probably because of the amount of times she'd been made fun of as a kid.

Jessica: She must've had a lot of sad stories. So Arnold, did you ever figure out the motive behind the murder?

Arnold: Yes I did, and it all started in high school...

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Mel Brunswick, February 25, 1977 (16 years old)

“Oh my god, have you heard the news?”

“Have you heard?”

“How will Alexis feel?”

“I can’t believe Avery would do that!”

“Avery? Why would Jonah do that?”

As I walk through the halls of school, trying to get to my locker before lunch, I can feel everyone's eyes on me, and it's not for a good reason. Earlier today, I heard Avery crying to the guidance counselor about how she kissed Jonah Rewler, Alexis’s boyfriend. Then, during second period, Avery started bothering me about my voice.

“Ugh, you’re so loud. If I were like you, I don’t know what I would do, but I certainly wouldn’t go to school,” Avery said with a smirk.

“WELL AT LEAST I DIDN’T KISS MY FRIEND’S BOYFRIEND!” As soon as I said that, I regretted it. I covered my mouth and my eyes widened. Everyone turned to look at me and Avery and it was one of the most embarrassing moments of my life. Tears started welling in Avery’s eyes and she ran out of the room.

In our town, gossip spreads quickly, especially when your parents are as important as Avery’s. Within forty-eight hours, everyone knew that Avery had kissed Jonah, and that she caused the break-up between him and Alexis. Alexis and Clara and the rest of the ‘popular girls’ stopped talking to Avery and she became a loner. Soon, her parents started losing business because no one wants to be associated with the parents of a cheater.

Then one day, Avery and her family were just... gone. A few months later everyone found out that her family had moved away to Montgomery, Alabama. We also found out that her parents sent her to a Catholic school.

After that, everything at school went back to normal and people started ignoring me again. It was almost comforting because there was no drama, no attention on me. I was free again to do what I wanted and no one was bothering me. The town was quiet.

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Arnold Pailer, Aug 30, 2014

Jessica: Wow. Well, I get why people didn't want to tell Mel their secrets.

Arnold: To be fair, Avery didn't really tell Mel, Mel eavesdropped.

Jessica: Good point! So, Avery murdered Mel?

Arnold: Yes.

Jessica: How was the murder executed? How did Avery come back and get away with it? Well, for ten years.

Arnold: When Avery had just got sent to her Catholic school, she devised a plan of revenge, the whole situation meant a lot to her. She lost a friend, lost her status, and even her parents were disappointed in her. Mel had unknowingly ruined Avery's life.

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Avery Rile, March 15, 1977 (17 years old)

I sit in my room at this trash bag of a place thinking of all of the things I could be doing if Mel Brunswick hadn't ruined my life. It's not like the actual school is bad or anything, it's just not... me? I can't wear my boot cut jeans and striped turtlenecks, I have to wear ugly plaid skirts and ugly navy blouses. Mel Brunswick took all of the things I liked away from me; my style, my friends, my town. Now I need revenge. She needs to feel what I felt. But what should I do?

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27 years later (44 years old)

I walk into The Melted Bean, the bell on the door rings.

"You must be Avery. You're here for the job interview right?" she looks up at me from her phone with a smile on her face.

“Yes, I am.” I smile back, tossing my brown hair behind my shoulder. It gets annoying sometimes because it always seems to follow where I go.

*My story relates to the summer theme because when the dream happens the second time my character, “knows from where she came from and where she is going.” My character knows what her surroundings are. And she figures out something but that part you are going to figure out! :)*

### **+DREAMING+ by Eyla Eisenberg Castro, Age: 10**

The world is cold and small and dark, no place to take a breath. I am ALONE in the void of space. I curl up into a ball and start crying. I'm scared. Why is this happening to ME? I hope it will all be okay. I WILL get out of here. My head starts spinning and I fall to the ground. I can't remember what happened before, before all of this.

I look under the big blue and green sphere just stars and planets. I hop on the star under the Earth. The stars are glowing bright like the sun. I hop to go on and on. Till I get to the Milky Way. I sit down and look at my life and how far I've come. Then I just lay there looking at the stars. They shine like a flashlight.

Then I woke up. I'm in my room, anime posters of toilet bound demon slayer and spy x family drape my walls. Pictures of my cats and my family are hung up on my walls. I sit up and I ask myself what just happened anyways. I pick myself up out of my loft bed and I get dressed. I get a black tank top and a long sleeve under shirt with jeans and leg warmers. I can feel the fine little hairs against my legs when I move around. I grab my small pink-ish plush from my bed and when I walk out of my room my parents don't seem awake yet so I check on them, slowly creaking the door open. I see that they are still sleeping, so I slowly close the door.

I go to the kitchen then I pour myself a bowl of cereal then place it on the kitchen island then I get a can of wet food for my cats. I open it and I grab a bowl from the shelf and place it down and put the cat food in the bowl and my cat Ashe comes, her silky smooth gray fur shines well, she comes out meowing and I'm pretty sure she was trying to say, “I'm hungry please put the bowls down so me and Leo can eat! :3” So I place down the bowls so they can eat and my mom comes out of her room and says, “thanks for feeding the cats without me asking.”

I giggle and say, “you’re welcome!”

I quickly eat my cereal and grab my pink backpack with an Owl House key chain and it has the logo for the show hanging from the zipper.

“Are you ready?” I shout.

My mom says, “Yes I'm coming.”

My mom walks out with me through the doorway and I hop into the back seat then my mom starts the car and we drive to school.

When I get there I say, “Bye mom!”

“Have a great day,” my mom answers.

Then I walk in and head to class.

Then I hear a voice behind me that says, “Wait up!”

I stop and turn around and my friend Audrey says, “let's walk to class together,” with a big grin.

And I say, “sure!”

We enter the classroom and the boys are making jokes in the corners of the classroom and the girls are gossiping and braiding each other's hair. I sigh as the girls stare at me and Audrey as we sit down at the other side of the room.

Then one of the nerdy kids says, “guys the teacher is coming back!”

Everyone rushes and cleans their desks. The boys clean off spit balls and straws and the girls clean off brushes and hair ties as quickly as they could.

I roll my eyes. The teacher walks in the room as everyone stares at her. She has long wavy brunette hair and almond eyes and she is wearing a small brown jacket and a dress with brown leaves like a fall morning.

“Good morning class.”

All the class says, “good morning,” except me.

After some math and reading the leader of the girls known as Sara says, “psst!”

I look up from my sketch book.

She continues, “can you pass this to alexa?”

I really don’t want to get in trouble but I don’t want to ruin my reputation so I grab the note and shove it under Alexa's chair and quickly get back into my chair and I am unseen besides Alexa seeing me as she stuffs it in her pocket. The bell rings.



“Recess!”

Everyone shouts and we all run outside. I sit down on the swing, I swing for a little bit then I sketch a tiny frog. It is a small brown one with little freckles near its eyes. The frog is about one inch tall and very cute. I mostly make my drawings like cartoons but not like Mickey Mouse cartoons F.Y.I. Anyways, some girls invite me to play four-square. Then the bell rings again and we all go to our hooks and grab our lunch. Then we all walk to lunch slowly but surely.

Then we split up in lines, some lining up for cafeteria lunch and the others sitting down with their own lunch from their homes. We all talk about what happened during the day and the day goes past. I get picked up and I go home. I say hi to my cats and pet them. Then I put my stuff down and walk to my room and grab a book and start reading.

Then I fall asleep . . . I'm on a star no NO! Not again, why am I here? It's ok, it's ok maybe I should go another way right? I look around and see shades of black and purple stars twinkling in the darkness and the Milky Way kind of looks like milk. I grab a star and jump. I jump off the earth and I place the star under me. It's hot like a hug. I like this feeling. I ride the star like a skateboard down to an abyss. It is cold and dark. I land. B-but I thought there was no bottom but here I am. I get dizzy. I fall to my knees. I see a crack of light. It gets bigger and bigger 'til a hole opens under me and I fall. Into the light then I wake up. I yawn. It keeps on getting worse and worse. I think to myself, I check my watch and it's about 6:35 AM. I still have some time to sleep but I don't want to sleep. I don't want it happening again. Why is this happening? Never mind I just wish I didn't have these dreams, do my dreams have meaning? Where in space am I? Am I truly alone? Am I not seeing something? Am I actually DREAMING?

*My story connects to the theme because the main character in my story knows where she's from and knows where she is trying to go. She is from the beehive and lost in the forest. She is trying to find her way home and she is also trying to find the old bee, Beero, who helped her when she was lost.*

## **Blossom the Bee by Sydney Robinson, Age: 9**

### Chapter One

Once, in a magical forest, on a magical tree, there was a beehive. Inside, the walls were dripping with honey. Today was a very important day for the bees. The queen bee was making a speech on her honeycomb chair. All the bees were crowding around the queen. The queen's family was there too. Just then, a shiny trumpet was blown to announce the queen. The queen and her family bowed. In the queen's family there was the queen, the father, the older sister, the younger brother, and Blossom, the littlest of all. Just then the queen started talking. She talked about the terrifying wasps that recently visited, unicorn sightings, and the newest update on flower technology. What the bees called "flower technology" was actually camouflage. They take flower petals from the ground and glue them together. The bees make them into hats so they look like flowers. As the queen was talking, Blossom, the littlest girl in the queen's family saw a horn out the window, could - could this be a unicorn?

The queen was just talking about how there hasn't been many unicorn sightings lately... Blossom would be a hero so blossom ran to the window. She saw a beautiful rainbow colored horn in the distance. She opened the window but how would she get down? Her little wings couldn't fly yet. They were still so tiny. So she climbed. She climbed all the way down the tree. She ran into the woods. She could almost feel the magic of the unicorn. She ran as fast as her little legs could run. She stopped. Here she was, one bush away from a unicorn. She imagined the unicorn: beautiful, elegant.

"Pre-happy birthday," said loud voices from the other side of the bush.

What? She thought. She peeked through the bush. About a dozen ugly green frogs stared at her.

“What are you doing here?” asked one of the frogs.

“What are you doing here?” asked Blossom.

“It’s Freddy’s birthday!” said another frog. “He’s turning 9.”

“Oh,” said Blossom. Every single frog was wearing a fake plastic unicorn horn.

Blossom put her head down. She started to walk home. She walked for a little bit but she didn’t reach home. Wait, where is home?

## Chapter Two

Blossom looked around. She tried to remember which way her beehive home was. She realized that she was tired so she sat down at the roots of a tree. Soon she fell asleep. She woke up to someone yelling, “Blossom!”

When she opened her eyes she saw her sister Lily.

“Blossom!” said Lily. “I was sent to go look for you!”

“Really?” asked Blossom, surprised.

“Let’s go home,” said Lily.

“Okay,” said Blossom. Blossom and Lily started to walk home.

“Wait which way again?” asked Lily. “Oh no,” said Lily. The two bees stood, not sure what to do. Blossom looked up at the sky.

“It’s getting dark,” said Blossom. And it was. Lily and Blossom found a cave and decided to sleep there for the night.

The next morning they decided to walk around the woods.

“Maybe we will find home or someone who can help us,” said Lily. As they walked deeper and deeper into the woods they realized they were nowhere near home.

“What are we going to do?” said Blossom.

“I don’t know,” said Lily.

Just then they heard a noise coming from a bush.

“Whoops!” an old bee stumbled out of the bush. “Oh, hello I am Beero,” said the old bee. He looked like he’d been there for a while.

“Oh!” said Beero. “You are from the great bee castle! Oh my!”

“Oh hello,” said Lily, nervously.

“Hello,” said Blossom. She was holding on tightly to Lily’s hand.

“Are you lost?” asked Beero.

“Um, yes we are,” said Lily.

“Do you know the way?” asked Blossom.

“Why yes I do!” said Beero proudly. “You take a left at the big oak tree, a right at the tree with the beautiful blue flowers, and another right at the tiny bush.”

“Okay,” said Lily. “Thank you.”

“Okay,” Lily said as they walked away from the old Bee. “There’s the big oak tree,” said Lily. “Okay now we turn left,” said Lily.

They turned right at the tree with blue flowers and at the tiny bush. I don’t see the castle,” said Blossom.

“I don’t either,” said Lily. “I guess he gave us the wrong directions.

“Hey,” said Blossom. “What’s that?”

“What?” asked Lily.

“I...it’s rain!” said Blossom. A thousand little drops of water started to fall from the sky.

“Let’s go under that tree,” said Lily as she pointed to a big tree. It was getting dark so they fell asleep. In the morning the rain had stopped.

### Chapter Three

“I think I know how we can find a way out,” said Lily the next morning.

“How?” asked Blossom.

“I’ll climb the tree,” said Lily. “Maybe we will see the castle.”

“Good idea,” said Blossom. So Lily started to climb. She got higher and higher. Soon she was at the top. She very carefully stood up making sure she didn’t fall. She could see the trees in the distance.

“I see the castle!” said Lily. “I see it!” said Lily. She was happy and relieved. “We need to go straight!” said Lily as she climbed down the tree. When Lily got down she started to walk.

“This way,” Lily said to Blossom. They walked straight for a while.

“I’m tired,” said Blossom.

“So am I,” said Lily. “I guess we could take a break.”

“Let’s sit under that tree,” said Blossom.

“Okay,” said Lily. They rested for a while and then continued to walk. Soon they heard more voices. This time they waited before they said hello. They heard more voices. It sounded like the queen! Blossom and Lily ran through the bush. On the other side was the queen, their dad, and their brother!

“Blossom? Lily?” The queen sounded surprised. She hugged them. They had a party and invited everyone in the bee kingdom. But that night Lily couldn’t stop thinking about the old bee they’d met in the forest.

## Chapter Four

That night Lily couldn’t stop thinking about the old bee they’d met in the forest. So Lily decided she would go back to the woods. She would find the man and bring him to the castle. The next morning she went straight to the woods. Lily remembered how to get out. The night before, during the party, she had made a map of the woods in case she needed to go into the woods again.

The woods were more peaceful than she remembered. But she was still worried about Beero. She heard there were evil unicorns in the woods, maybe the woods were more dangerous than she thought. Lily was scared, but she needed to get Beero out of the woods, because he was a bee after all.

When she was in the middle of the woods, Lily took out the map from her bag and started looking at it. But just as she was about to put it away, she heard a scream coming from deeper in the woods. She ran to the noise, and saw Beero, who was face to face with a unicorn! It had a black mane and navy blue fur. It took Lily a second to realize, but, it was an evil unicorn! And it was heading towards Beero!

TO BE CONTINUED.....

*What I wrote this session is a story version of a play I have been writing for about a year now. It is a story of an elderly man in the 70s finding out that he is gay and trying to learn about himself. I think that this relates to our summer theme, “Know from where you came, and to where you are going” from Pirkei Avot because in the story, Robert finds himself going to a gay club and meeting people from his past, reminding him of his childhood. He is coming from a place of being completely in the closet and terrified of the fact that he is gay to being more comfortable in his identity and trying to heal relationships with his family.*

### ***The club by Kooper Kniaz, Age: 15***

“We leave at 10:00,” she said. 10:00 comes around and I follow her down the dark, eerie driveway shaded by trees. My walker sounds like TV static as it rolls down the uneven pavement. I get in her car and she drops my walker in the back. She drives me through the city in her brown Ford Mustang with ugly tan colored seats, much faster than I would like. As we pull down an alley, I begin to believe this may all be a big joke but I follow her anyway because what the hell do I have to lose. I step out of the car and smell sewage in the wind. I try to get my walker but she stops me.

“There is no space where we are going. If I could let you bring it I would,” she says. So instead, I cling to her arm. Her velvety chenille sweater rubs up against me.

We arrive at a flight of concrete stairs standing out against the red brick of the buildings. I pray this is not where she plans to bring me but, of course, I hear a cheery ‘Here we are!’ coming from beside me. I’m unsure what I am expecting from this woman but I begin to think she might just be out of her mind. After I shuffle down the stairs to a heavy steel door, Lisa knocks a distinct pattern. Tap. Tap. TapTapTapTap. Tap. Tap. The door flies inward and a cloud of warm air gusts out into the alley. I am suddenly surrounded by loud music and even louder laughs. The smell of cheap liquor overwhelms my nose. As I scan my eyes around the room, I see men dressed in floral dresses linking hands with each other. I watch them lean in and allow their lips to interlock with a peaceful loving look in their eyes. They hold each other with such comfort, they look so at ease, a privilege I only ever knew from hiding deep inside closets with friends.

Two men walk over to me, their hands interlocked swaying through the space between them. I see the man on the left moving his mouth to speak to me but all I can hear is the buzz of everyone around me with a Chubby Checker song blasting in the background. I cut him off, shouting that I cannot understand what he is saying and pointing to my hearing transistor. He pulls me away into a dark alcove away from the noise and pulls over a chair for me.

“Do you understand what is going on at this club?” he says. Barely able to hear my thoughts over the hum of the music, I shake my head slightly.

“You're at *the club*,” he says. After an unreasonably long period of staring at each other, he breaks the silence and says, “Robert, do you remember me from highschool?” As he says that, my mind floods with memories of the days we had spent together hiding from the world, sharing secrets, and holding each other through the night.

I think back to the days I would hop out my second story window to go meet a boy behind the local Krogers and suddenly everything clicks in my head.

“Do you and Lisa think that I am a homosexual?”

“Honey, you're gay! I watched your heart break every time one of your friends went off and got married. You called me when your wife left you because you did not even want to kiss her. Of course you are gay. I was quite light in the loafers back in the day, we were old buddies in high school. My name is Thomas and this is my lover Ringo. Come on outside with me Robert, I want to explain some things to you,” he says. Begrudgingly, I follow him out the back. As soon as we are outside, I hear nothing from the buzzing building we just left and the silence feels more painful and loud than when I first walked into the club.

“Start walking,” he says gently. As I look around me, I see a pattern of beautiful painted rocks, some with initials surrounded by hearts and others with bright colors painted to look like flags. All the stones came together to make a maze hardly visible under the night sky. I begin to walk through it, talking out loud to Thomas.

“I mean I always felt this way, just like you said. I was always so sad when my buddies went off to get married. I always felt as though I stood out from the other men at church when they stood around outside discussing their wives and the women they saw on the street but I just... I never thought anything of it! G-d, why am I so stupid! How did I not

know! Is it too late to fix this? Thomas, please tell me it's not too late. I need to fix this. I can't believe I let myself live like this.”

He looks at me with the compassion I have only seen from my mother when I was a child and says, “Robert, it's okay. It isn't a bad thing, it just. . . is! You know?”

I feel myself start to freeze up and my breathing getting heavier as I stand there outside this club I was dragged to. I feel the same fear I felt as a child hearing my dad open the front door. I'm suddenly 16 again and I'm frozen in the middle of my room with an Irving Berlin record playing scratchily in the background praying my father doesn't come in to see my friend hiding behind my bed.

I open my mouth to try and talk but I can't get anything out. My mind swirls with memories and I feel my eyes start to glisten at the edges thinking of the life I lived. I shuffle out of the maze I had been walking in and go to sit down on a log, feeling every muscle tense up as I try and lower myself down. After what feels like an eternity, I feel myself finally hit the log and all I can do is put my head in my hands and sob. Images of my life flit from moment to moment clouding my vision. Late nights spent praying to feel normal. The pit in my stomach after saying the dreaded ‘I do’ to my late wife. The sorrow I felt watching my friends stare down waitresses and nurses while I stared at them wishing they would turn to look back at me again.

I hear a quiet voice beside me pulling me out of my memories as if I was in a deep sleep.

“Robert? Robert, are you alright?”

Feeling my throat start to close and tears drip down my old, wrinkled face, all I manage to push out is a weak, “mhhm”. Realizing how long I have been out of my house and how late at night it is, I feel a wave of exhaustion hit me and ask Thomas to bring me back to Lisa. She lets me hang onto her arm for support and leads me to the car.

We sit quietly together for a few minutes before she asks, “So, what did you think?”

Still overwhelmed and confused from the last hour and a half, I mumble, “I'm not sure. I need to go to sleep.”

She hands me my walker and watches me make my way up the driveway.



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I wake up and go to get the newspaper. Along with it is a letter labeled 'For Robert'. I bring it inside to read. It's an invitation saying, "it was great seeing you last night, Robert. Ringo and I would love to take you to lunch. If you are free today, we will be at the Melrose diner at 12:00 pm, feel free to join us!" I quickly go to call Lisa again and ask her to please drive me to the Melrose diner.

I am met with an annoyingly enthusiastic, 'Of course! I will head over right now!'

Once again, she helps me into her car and drives me back into the city. She lets me out of the car with a cheery, 'Have so much fun!' as if I am her child. I grab my walker and head into the restaurant.

As soon as I walk in, I see the same men I met last night but this time dressed not in floral tops and flowy skirts but instead jeans and a sweater. After a few minutes of small talk, they start to ask me how I feel about last night. I have decided I am too old to lie so I will just tell them everything.

"I'm terrified that I did not realize my homosexuality before now! I lived my entire life wondering what the hell was wrong with me and only now when I am 70 do I discover what this is. I can't help but think about all the advertisements on the television about homosexuality and how dangerous it is but I have never noticed anything dangerous about myself? Am I different?"

A waiter comes over to our table and takes our order, giving me a moment to compose myself. He walks away and Ringo says, "All those commercials are fake, there is no illness and we are not dangerous. They are just afraid of us and our joy, don't listen to them."

"So that's it?" I ask. "We're normal people who are also gay?"

"Exactly!" Thomas says. I feel that same empty pit in my stomach I felt the night before. Overwhelmed with grief for the life I could have lived if only I had known. I tortured my poor wife trying to tell her this was normal, my own kids even saw it! I ruined my family with my own stupidity and oblivion.

"I need to apologize," I say, feeling myself tense up with anticipation. We finish our meal and I get a ride back to my house where I then ask my son and his wife to please

come visit me later in the afternoon. After a lot of cleaning and even more writing, I finish putting together what I want to say at just about the same time I hear my doorbell ring.

“Come in, come in,” I say cheerfully. After sitting them both down and situating them with a cup of hot tea I begin talking. “Son, I am sure you have heard some of this from Lisa, but I wanted to tell you myself. I am gay. I hope to be able to explain this all to you. I'm sure you remember all the fights your mother and I used to have about how she thought I no longer loved her and she felt unappreciated. I am so truly sorry to you James. I wish I had never put you through that but I want you to know, I did love your mother. She was my best friend. She had been by my side since we were children. I was just never attracted to her. I wish so badly I could have fixed this before her passing but, since I can't, would you be willing to come with me to apologize to your mother?”

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“Lisa, would you mind staying in the car for a bit? I would rather be able to do this just Dad and I,” James says.

“Of course not! I will be right here waiting for you,” she says with that same cheery voice she always uses. James and I walk silently through the cemetery over to his mother's grave and he helps me to sit down on my walker while he sits on the ground next to me.

“Betty, I am so truly sorry for how I treated you before our divorce and, eventually, your passing but I would like to explain some things to you. I always loved you. That never ever changed, you were my best friend and my partner in crime but I could never truly love you the way you deserved. . . I am gay, Betty. I was never really attracted to you and I am sorry I didn't realize earlier. I just hope you can hear me now.”

I hear my son sniffle next to me as a gust of cool, fall wind brushes through his hair. Fall was always Betty's favorite season, maybe that was her saying she heard me. I feel my son's arms wrap around my waist the same way he did as a child and all he says to me is, “I love you dad, it's okay.”

# Signature Page: